

Church of the Cross

BOSTON

Children's Ministry Handbook

REVISED: July 2024

Contact Information:

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Director of Children's Ministry Email: sara@cotcboston.org

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Website: www.cotcboston.org

Locations:

Nursery, Sunday School & Worship Service: 105 Jersey St., Boston, MA 02215

Office Address: 29 Stanhope St., 4th Flr., Boston, MA 02116

Sunday Schedule:

Nursery Schedule (ages 0-3) : 10:15 a.m. - 11:35 a.m.

Sunday School Schedule (age 3 - grade 5): 10:55 a.m. - 11:35 a.m.

Youth grades 6 and above remain with parents for the duration of the Sunday service.

Childcare may be provided for other scheduled church activities.

Children’s Ministry Handbook
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Mission and Vision and Approach¹

Mission

Our mission is three-fold:

- to come alongside parents in instructing children with gospel-centered teaching
- to build community among the children
- to include children in intergenerational worship

with the goal that *they might never know a day apart from Christ*.

It is our **vision** that our children’s ministry will be a place where children feel known and loved, where they have fun while learning in a respectful environment, where they learn the value of being part of a church, and where their parents are encouraged and equipped.

Our **approach** depends on two vital contexts: a faithful church family and a faithful home life. Together, these contexts provide the nurture, counsel, discipline, and relationships needed for growth in holiness and love. And, when our children stumble, as they inevitably will, these two contexts can make manifest the grace, mercy, and forgiveness of the God upon which our children, and all of us depend.

Groupings

We follow the public school grade cutoffs and promote children to the next group each fall.

Children are placed in groupings as follows:

- Nursery
- Scramblers (ages 2.5-4)
- Climbers (ages 4-6)
- Explorers (grades 1-2)
- Mountaineers (grades 3-6)
- Youth (6th-12th grades)

Director of Children’s Ministry

The Director of Children’s Ministry is responsible for overseeing the CotC Children's Ministry (ages 2.5-5th grade). This director manages personnel, both volunteers and employees and is also responsible to ensure policies and procedures are implemented appropriately. If you have any concerns or questions, the Director will be happy to discuss these with you.

¹For a more complete overview of our mission, vision, and approach, we encourage all parents and volunteers to read “Our Vision for Family, Youth, and Children’s Ministry” which is available upon request.

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Roles & Responsibilities of Volunteers

Nursery Workers

The Nursery will always be staffed by at least two fully screened adults. These may be volunteers or paid nursery care workers. Nursery workers do not diaper. If diapering or other care is needed, parents will be contacted.

Sunday School Volunteers

Each Sunday School class will have at least one designated Teacher and one Assistant each week. A Floating Volunteer will be present in the Sunday School area at all times. All Sunday School volunteers are fully screened.

Teachers

Teachers are responsible to prepare in advance to teach the Sunday School lesson as well as to prepare for any activities and make sure the classroom is set up before children arrive. Teachers should arrive at least 30 minutes before the service starts to help set up the classroom, practice the lesson, and pray for the children in the group. It is important for Sunday School Teachers to consistently follow the guidelines to reinforce behavior expectations.

Assistants

The Teaching Assistant is responsible for proactively assisting the Teacher by looking for ways to make the lesson run more smoothly and helping children who may need extra assistance. A crucial aspect of this role is to support the Teacher by consistently following the guidelines to reinforce behavior expectations. They too, should arrive at least 30 minutes before the service starts to help set up the classroom, practice any parts of the lesson, and pray for the children in the group.

Floating Volunteer

The Floating Volunteer will monitor the Sunday School area to ensure adherence to child protection protocols and to be available in case a child should need their parent. Floating Volunteers see to the general safety of both children and teachers and monitor that no children or adults are unattended. Floating Volunteers also help monitor the check-out process..

For the complete job description of each role please see the [Job Descriptions Document](#)

Overview & Procedures

Nursery

Nursery care is provided for infants ages 0-3. The Nursery is open every Sunday from 10:15 am - 11:40 am. Babies are welcome to join Nursery once they can sit up independently.

Nursery Check in Procedure

When you arrive at church, please check your child in on the check-in iPad. Please place your child's name tag where they will not remove it and keep the pick-up code with you.

Nursery Drop off Procedure

The Nursery is open as of 10:15 and you are welcome to drop off your infant anytime after this. Please take a moment to clean your child's hands before dropping him/her off for nursery care (hand sanitizer provided at the drop-off door) and label any sippy cups with your child's name so that we can ensure that children are drinking only from their own cups. Due to allergies, no outside food is allowed in the Nursery.

When you drop off your child at the nursery

- Please leave your phone number on the check-in sheet
- Please list any special instructions (allergies, health concerns, special needs)
- If your child is sick, please be considerate of others and do not send them to the Nursery

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Nursery Pick up Procedure

Please pick up your infant promptly during the Passing of the Peace.

- Bring your 3-digit pick up code with you to pick up your child. Present your code to the Nursery Worker

and the nursery worker will check that your code matches your child’s name tag. If the codes do not match or you do not have your code with you, you will not be allowed to pick up your child and the Director of Operations will be contacted.

Sunday School

Sunday School is available during the Sunday morning service for children ages 2 (if turning 3 before the end of December of the year the school year began) through grade 5.

Sunday School Check in Procedure

When you arrive at church please check your child in to Sunday School using the check-in iPad. Place the printed name tag on your child in a place they will not remove it and keep the pick-up code with you or give it to the adult who will be picking up your child(ren) from Sunday School. Please bring your children to the Sanctuary with you where they will worship with us until the Celebrant invites them forward for the children’s prayer. After the prayer, checked-in children may proceed to Powery Hall on their own or may be accompanied by you. If your child is not wearing a name tag at this time, he/she will be sent back to you to sign in and get a name tag.

- If your child is sick, please be considerate of others and do not send him/her to Sunday School. .

Sunday School Check-Out Procedure

During the passing of the peace, please proceed to Powery Hall to pick up your child. Show your check-out code to your child’s teacher or assistant. They will then match your code to your child’s name tag. If the codes do not match or if you have misplaced your code, a volunteer will notify the Director of Children’s Ministry or Floating Volunteer who will verify your photo ID with a list of pre-approved pick-up persons. Children will never be dismissed to unknown adults or adults without the proper pick-up code or photo ID.

Sunday School Expectations

In order to facilitate this and to create a safe and positive learning environment in Sunday School, a few important behavior expectations are in place for all. Each week at the beginning of Sunday School, we review these expectations and periodically we discuss both examples and non-examples of each behavior. You can support your child by also discussing these expectations at home.

Expectation	Example	Non-Example
Be Kind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Saying “please” and “thank you” ● Asking a new person if they would like to sit with you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Calling names ● Making fun of someone
Be Respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follow instructions ● Listen while others are talking Raise your hand to participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Using bad words ● Interrupting the teacher
Keep your hands and bodies to yourself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sitting in your own seat ● Staying in your personal space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poking your friend ● Writing on your neighbor’s paper

When children are not following these expectations and their behavior is minimally disruptive, they will be redirected in a respectful manner (*i.e.* talking while the teacher is talking, not following directions). If a child does not respond to redirection (*i.e.* continues behavior, repeats behavior, argues) or is aggressive in any way (*i.e.* calls someone a name, bite/hits/kicks), the Floating Volunteer will contact the parent to address their child’s behavior.

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If you are contacted, please come right away to get your child. If you have any questions, please talk to the Sunday School Teacher and Director of Children's Ministry after the service. If necessary, you are also welcome to discuss how to best resolve concerns with another church leader.

Youth

Each of our youth is assigned a mentor from the congregation to walk through their Christian life with them. These mentors meet up individually with the youth and take the youth group out for lunch once a month. Scripture reading, prayer, fun and fellowship form the basis for these meetings.

Our youth volunteers are fully screened using the same process as the Sunday School volunteers: application and agreements, an informal interview, reference checks, completion of Sexual Abuse Awareness training, and a background check.

We also put in place the following protocols:

- Mentors are to meet with their mentees in public spaces, not private living quarters.
- Mentors should ensure that parents always know where and for how long they are meeting with their child.
- Mentors should not communicate with the youth on social media channels. They may text or email their mentees, preferably with the parents copied in.
- The youth and parents know to whom they should report if they suspect an issue.
- Multiple people on the staff team know about each of the mentor-mentee relationships.
- If the mentor needs or wants to drive the mentee in a car, they should obtain written permission from the parents.

Safety

Parental Supervision

Parents are responsible for the supervision of their own children at Church if no childcare workers are clearly designated to supervise children. Children should *never* be left unattended, either alone or in groups. If you ever see any unattended child/children together without supervision or an unrelated adult alone with children, please speak up immediately and seek out help if necessary.

Child Protection Policy

Our children are very precious to us and we consider it a privilege to partner with their parents in their discipleship and training. This policy is a living document which is reviewed periodically so as to maintain safety and allow for ministry to happen. A copy of this document is available upon request.

A brief summary of our Child Protection Policy follows:

1. CotC follows the "Two Adult Rule".

This means that no adult is to be alone with a child. In keeping with this, the Nursery will always be staffed by at least two people, there is always a teacher and assistant in each Sunday School class, and a Floating Volunteer monitors all classes and Sunday School areas to ensure child protection policies are adhered to.

2. Our children are safest if we all take ownership for their protection. If you see anything at anytime that

does not match our policy or procedures or seems out of order, please speak up! Make sure things are resolved before you move on.

Below are some examples of acceptable/unacceptable interactions between non-relative adults and children at church-related functions:

Acceptable Interactions	Unacceptable Interactions
Affirmations about behavior and character	Affirmations based on physical attributes or development
Age-appropriate conversations about God’s view on culturally relevant topics	Sexually oriented conversations or materials, nudity of any kind
Kind words; patient tone	Harsh words; raised voice
Pat on the back or holding the hand of a small child to guide them, both with others present	Full body hug, touching in any area of the body that would be covered by a bathing suit, kissing
Publicly posting online about church events	Private communication between children and non-relative church volunteers/employees via social media or cell phone
Redirecting undesirable behaviors	Physical discipline in any form
Providing children only with church-sanctioned food during snack time	Use of intoxicants or tobacco around or with children
Showing a Christian song or lesson-related video with children in Sunday School	Sharing your cell phone with a child at church and/or allowing them unfiltered internet access
Acceptable Interactions	Unacceptable Interactions
Taking a child’s photo at a church event and sharing it with a parent and then deleting	Taking a photo of a child; posting a photo of a church event with children in it online without written permission

3. No Diapering or Toilet Training Provided; Restroom Use Only with Parent Supervision (age 0 - grade 2).

CotC does not allow employees or volunteers to participate in diapering or toilet training of children who are not their own. If a child needs assistance, a parent or legal guardian will be contacted. “Accidents” are handled by reassuring the child and contacting the parent.

At CotC functions, children will not be accompanied to the restroom by Children’s Ministry workers. If a child aged 0 - grade 2 needs to use the restroom while in Sunday School, his/her parent or legal guardian will be contacted to accompany the child. If a child in Upper Elementary (grades 3-5) needs to use the restroom, the Assistant will allow the child to go to the restroom on his/her own, and wait at the classroom door until the child returns. Childcare workers should never be alone with a child in the restroom. Children may only use the restroom on the 2nd floor during Sunday School time. If the 2nd floor bathroom is unavailable parents should be notified to accompany their child to the bathroom no matter the child’s age.

4. All accidents/incidents must be reported regardless of injury.

This includes behavior that requires parent notification (including early pick-up) and suspected abuse/endorsement. *Employees and Volunteers hold primary responsibility for incident reporting whenever they are present.* Except in the case of suspected abuse/endorsement by a parent, the parent will be notified when a report is filed. Blank Incident Reports are available upon request.

Additionally those who work with children, even as Volunteers, are considered as [Mandated Reporters](#)

[in the State of Massachusetts](#) and are expected to follow the law in this regard.

5. All potential Children's Ministry Volunteers and Employees will be screened prior to serving in this ministry. The screening process includes approval by the rector, completion of the Children's Ministry Application and Agreements, an informal interview, reference verification, and a background check. Each applicant must also complete a Sexual Abuse Awareness Training video and participate in annual CotC Children's Ministry Training.

At CotC, all parents with infants and/or children are expected to serve in the children's ministry or nursery in some capacity. *No one is allowed to work with children if they are not wearing a name tag.* On any week that you are working with children, please get your name tag when you arrive. If you see any adult in the Nursery or Sunday School area or working with children who is not wearing a name tag, please remind them of this important safety requirement and if they do not comply, seek help if necessary.

Emergency/Fire

In the event of an emergency such as a fire, the exit procedure is as follows: Sunday School workers will instruct children not to talk, push or run and follow them quietly to exit the building. Adults will ensure that all children are with them before exiting. Workers and children will exit the building using the closest, safest stairway and walk directly to the parking lot adjacent to the sanctuary if it is safe. Alternatively, they will walk to the school parking lot on Kilmarnock Street. Parents will then meet their child as soon as they are able. Sunday School workers will remain with children until each child has been picked up by a parent or guardian.

Lockdown

If a Sunday School worker receives notification of a lockdown emergency or becomes aware of a dangerous situation from which they cannot safely flee with all the children in their care, they will take the following steps: Close all doors, turn off all lights and if possible, lock and block the door(s). They should also silence their cell phone, as well as instruct children to be silent and to take cover wherever possible. They will call 9-1-1 and, if possible, attempt to contact a person outside the room to tell them about the emergency. They will then wait for confirmation that it is safe before calling off the lockdown.

In the event that a lockdown is ever called, even if it proves to be a false alarm, an Incident Report must be filed immediately and all parents must be notified as soon as possible. We all pray that nothing like this occurs but we want to be prepared if it does occur.

Medical

- Due to allergies, no outside food is allowed in the Nursery or Sunday School.
- First aid kits are available in the Children's Ministry Cabinet however, CotC volunteers and staff are not prepared to give medical assistance. If needed, an ambulance will be called.
- A staff member or volunteer may not administer medical care or medication to any child while serving in Children's Ministry

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Incident Report

- Accident (please make report regardless of injury) Injury
 Behavior Requiring Parent Notification Suspected abuse/endangerment

Report in Reference to (First/Last name)		
Reported by (First/Last name)		
Date (dd/mm/yy)	Time (am/pm)	Specific Location
Was parent informed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>For all accidents or injuries, parent must be informed regardless of injury</i> Parent Response:		
Witness(es) (please list all)		
Description of incident:		
Description of <i>how</i> incident occurred:		
Description of follow up action taken:		
Additional Comments (please provide any other important information)		

To Be Completed by CotC Staff

Description of follow-up action, if any:

In case of suspected abuse, did reporter complete [Mandated Reporter requirements](#)? Yes No

Rector/Rector's Warden Signature _____ Date _____

Upon review, each Incident File is to be placed in Incident File folder by year

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Children's Ministry Application

This confidential application should be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or employment) involving the supervision of children or youth. This is not an employment application. The purpose of this application is to assist in the creation of a safe environment for children who participate in the programs of Church of the Cross. It is the position of Church of the Cross that suspicions or allegations of child abuse or neglect will be reported to relevant state authorities.

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email Address _____

Sex M F Date First Attended CotC _____ How long at current address? _____

Prior address _____

Please provide two references below. References may not be a family member. Please let references know you have listed them as a reference.

If you have been in attendance at CotC for less than 6 months, please make sure that one of your references is from a previous church. If possible, please also include one reference who has seen you interact with children or youth.

If you have been in attendance at CotC for more than 6 months, please make sure that one of your references is a CotC member. If possible, please also include one reference who has seen you interact with children or youth.

Reference Name	Number	Email	Relationship	Years Known
1.				
2.				

Relevant previous training, experience, volunteer work or employment involving children or students (List organization's name and address, type of work, dates, and a contact person familiar with your work there.)

Interests (please check all that apply)

Teacher Assistant Nursery Sunday School ages/grades/sex _____

Other _____

Application continues on reverse side...

Have you ever:

- Been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged? Yes No
- Been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding? Yes No
- Committed an act of child sexual abuse? Yes No
- Been diagnosed with any paraphiliac condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations)? Yes No

Has any member of your household:

- Been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged? Yes No
- Been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding? Yes No
- Committed an act of child sexual abuse? Yes No
- Been diagnosed with any paraphiliac condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations)? Yes No

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, please provide date(s) and detail(s):

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Children's Ministry Agreements

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Children's Ministry Handbook

I ACKNOWLEDGE that I have received a copy of the Children's Ministry Handbook. I have read and understood the contents of the Handbook and I agree to abide by its directions and procedures. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I might have about the policies in the Handbook. I understand that it is my responsibility to read and familiarize myself with the policies and procedures contained in the Handbook.

I understand that the statements contained in the Handbook are guidelines concerning some of the Church of the Cross policies and procedures and that this Handbook may be updated at any time.

I agree to read and abide by all policies and procedures provided to me by Church of the Cross.

Applicant Signature _____ Date _____

Please initial each of the following statements:

_____ I declare that all statements contained in my Children's Ministry Application are true. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission is cause for removal from any ministry involvement.

_____ I understand that I must be interviewed and recommended by the Church of the Cross Rector or designee before I begin service as a volunteer in Church of the Cross Children's ministries.

_____ I understand that I can withdraw from the application process at any time.

_____ I understand that if I work with children in any capacity at CotC, I am considered a Mandated Reporter in the State of Massachusetts and if approved to serve I agree to follow the law in this regard.

_____ I understand that Church of the Cross has a policy of ZERO TOLERANCE FOR ABUSE and takes all allegations of abuse seriously. I further understand that Church of the Cross cooperates fully with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. Abuse of any kind is grounds for immediate dismissal/removal from my volunteer position and possible criminal charges.

_____ I declare that I am not a pedophile or child molester. I have not perpetrated physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect against a child or disabled adult and I have never been accused of such acts.

_____ I understand and agree that false statements regarding past conduct and/or present situations may be grounds for denial of this application.

Release

I authorize Church of the Cross to contact all individuals, organizations and references listed in the Children's Ministry Application in order to verify the information I have provided. I agree to release from liability any person or organization providing information related to me, including those persons I have listed as references, as well as contact persons from my previous volunteer work or employment.

I specifically authorize Church of the Cross to undertake a criminal background check concerning my past.

I understand and agree that any information received from the background check and application verification will not be disclosed to me except as required by law, and I hereby waive any right I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me on this form.

By signing this form, I certify and affirm that the information I have given on this form is true, complete and correct in all respects.

Applicant Signature _____ Date _____